

Lead Has Wide-Ranging Effects

In recent years, the dangers of lead and other heavy metals found in paint, water pipes, and other items have been well documented. Problems with lead and wildlife have come to the attention of hunters as well. Poisoning of waterfowl results when they pick-up shotgun pellets while feeding in wetlands. Steel shot is now required nationwide when hunting waterfowl.

Existing evidence shows lead presents a clear threat to the California condor as well as many other birds. During the last century, condor numbers declined in part due to loss of habitat. Many condors also died from shooting and poisoning by toxic substances. At least three members of a dwindling population died due to lead poisoning in the 1980s.

Lead and Wildlife

Condors and other species of scavenging birds, such as golden eagles, bald eagles, turkey vultures, ravens and magpies eat the meat of dead animals. This includes any animal, large or small, that may have been shot and left behind by hunters, or gut piles from field-dressed game which can contain lead fragments resulting from the impact of a bullet hitting bone.

If scavengers consume lead shot or lead bullet fragments within any of the meat they eat, poisoning can result.

Lead directly affects individual animals. Strong stomach acids break down lead shot or bullet fragments into lead salts which are then absorbed into the bloodstream and carried to various parts of the body. The digestive tract becomes paralyzed and starvation results.

Recovery Program Underway

In 1987, the last wild California condor was taken into captivity. Many agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Bureau of Land Management, Los Angeles Zoo, San Diego Wild Animal Park, Ventana Wilderness Society and the Peregrine Fund have been working together to return the California condor to its native habitat. Beginning in 1992, captive-bred condors were released into the wilds of Southern California. Now captive-bred condors also fly over the Grand Canyon in Arizona, Big Sur in Central California and Baja California, Mexico.

Plans for the future include continued releases until recovery of the condor is achieved with more than 300 individuals in the separate wild populations. These birds still face many hazards, including collisions with power lines, shooting, and the ingestion of poisons such as lead.

Alternatives to Lead

Until this alternative ammunition is widely available, accepted and used by the consumer the California condor and other scavenger species will remain in danger of lead poisoning. Until that time, however, there are a number of things you can do to help. Keep reading to find out how.

Today it is widely acknowledged that a superior non-toxic copper bullet is available which is equal to lead in bullets. Hunters that have used the copper bullet have been extremely satisfied and recommend it as a suitable alternative to lead.

If you have any questions about the California condor or the associated Recovery Program,

Please contact:

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Hopper Mountain NWR Complex
California Condor Recovery Program
P.O. Box 5839
Ventura, California 93005
Hoppermountain@fws.gov
www.fws.gov/hoppermountain
Tel: (805) 644-5185
Fax: (805) 644-1732

Links to California Condor Recover Program Partners

Los Angeles Zoo
<http://www.lazoo.org/condorall/>

San Diego Wild Animal Park
http://www.sandiegozoo.org/wap/ex_condor_ridge.html

The Oregon Zoo
<http://www.oregonzoo.org/Condors/index.htm>

The Peregrine Fund World Center of Birds Prey
http://www.peregrinefund.org/conservation_category.asp?category=California%20Condor%20Restoration

U.S. Forest Service
www.fs.fed.us

Los Padres National Forest
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/snfpa/final-seis/biological-documents/BO/IV/7.htm>

California Department of Fish and Game
http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hcpb/species/t_e_spp/tebird/condor.shtml

Hi Mountain Condor Lookout
www.condorlookout.org

Morro Coast Audubon
www.morrocoastaudubon.org

Calpoly San Luis Obispo
www.calpoly.edu

U.S. Fish and Wildlife
<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>

Ventana Wildlife Society
<http://www.ventanaws.org/condors.htm>

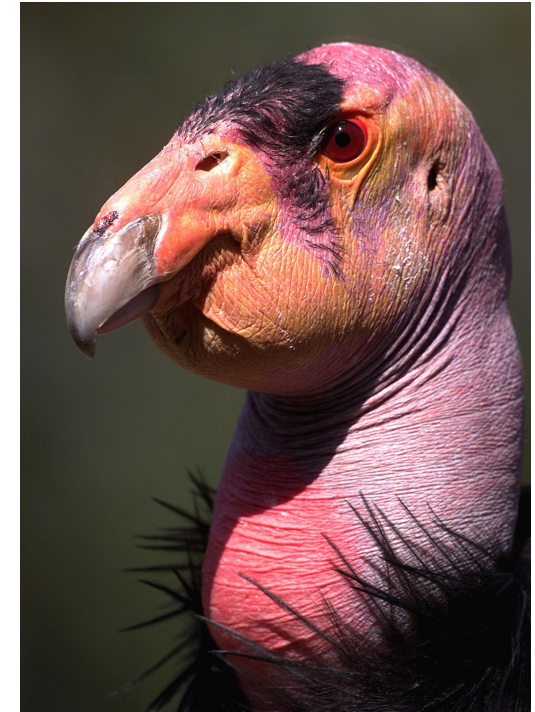
National Park Service
<http://www.nps.gov/pinn/naturescience/condors.htm>

Here are a few simple steps a recreational hunter can take to help reduce the threat of lead and other poisons to wild birds:

1. **Use steel shot** or other alternatives to lead. Support the use of, and research into, alternatives to lead at home and in the field.
2. **Don't shoot randomly**; report illegal shooting to the authorities.
3. Be sure of your shot and **take your game with you**, even small game and coyotes.
4. **Bury or cover the gut pile** of field-dressed game to make it less accessible to scavengers.
5. **Don't leave garbage or poisons** such as antifreeze* in the wild.

*In October 1992, a condor died due to poisoning by ethylene glycol, and ingredient in some antifreezes.

LEAD AND THE



CALIFORNIA CONDOR

